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Summary as of September 5

IEPA teams have:

- Investigated 16 scrap dealers:
 - 1 on Friday, September 1 (with USEPA, IEPA, AGO)
 - 5 on Saturday, September 2 (2 with USEPA/IEPA team)
 - 11 planned for today, September 5 (IEPA only)
- Investigated 6 Nicor Service Centers:
 - 2 on Friday, September 1 (IEPA only)
 - 4 on Saturday, September 2 (IEPA only)
- IEPA investigated remediation waste from several homes in Park Ridge and found no mercury detections in dumpsters or outside of packaged waste.
- Found mercury regulators at 3 scrap dealers, so far.
- Found mercury levels of concern at 2 Service Centers.
- Soil samples taken at one scrap dealer on Friday, September 1, showed mercury levels below the remediation threshold for commercial/industrial sites, but above levels acceptable for residential use or for construction worker exposures.

BRIEFING REPORT

Friday, September 1

1. Chicago Heights Iron and Supply (1715 Wentworth Avenue)
 - a. IEPA and USEPA at site
 - b. Opened 10 regulators; 8 had visible mercury present.
 - c. Took 5 soil samples and tested material found in regulators.
 - Soil testing results:
 - Sample 1 - 136 mg/kg
 - Sample 2 - 24 mg/kg
 - Sample 3 - 40 mg/kg
 - Sample 4 - 13 mg/kg
 - Sample 5 - 3.4 mg/kg
 - Confirmation of pea-sized beads elemental mercury material collected from regulators.
 - d. Jerome meter - Got positive reading (.026 mg/m³) in container where regulators were piled. Even higher readings were obtained the prior evening (.039 to .083 mg/m³).
2. Schaumburg Service Center
 - IEPA team.
 - a. New procedure in place - open 55 gallon drum for regulators
 - b. Jerome meter:
 - (1) Nothing inside around mercury work area.
 - (2) Dumpster outside - Got some positive readings (.004 to .012 mg/m³).
3. Elgin Service Center
 - IEPA team.
 - a. New procedure in place - open drum for regulators.
 - b. Jerome meter - Trace reading on floor (.005) in work area and got zeros around roll-off box and ground.
4. Homes in Park Ridge - We went to site where SET was doing cleanup work. No detections from meter around dumpster or packaged cleanup waste.

Saturday, September 2

1. Berlinsky Scrap - 212 Page Avenue, in Joliet.
 - IEPA team.
 - a. Found some mercury-type regulators (several dozen) in a pile.
 - b. Jerome meter - Got reading of .004 for one regulator pulled out of the pile.
2. Archer Metal - 4619 South Knox, in Chicago
 - Combined USEPA/IEPA team.
 - a. Don't get regulators here. They only transport for Nicor to another site (General Iron).
 - b. Jerome meter - Zero readings around site.
3. United Scrap - 1545 South Cicero Avenue, in Cicero.
 - a. No regulators taken here.
 - b. Jerome meter - No positive readings.
4. Gand D Salvage - 104 West Lincoln, in Loda.
 - a. Found several dozen regulators. Later learned that these are probably non-mercury-type (spring loaded). We got this information from Nicor person at Paxton Service Center.
 - b. Jerome meter - Got trace reading of .002.
5. General Iron - 1901 North Clifton, in Chicago.
 - Combined USEPA/IEPA team.
 - a. No regulators here. They only take the meters.
 - b. Jerome meter - Trace readings from .003 to .006.
6. Bellwood Service Center - 615 South Eastern Avenue, in Bellwood.
 - IEPA team.

- a. Inside work area - Got Jerome meter readings of .041, .137, and .065 near the floor. Got zero reading in breathing zone.
- b. Outside - Roll-off box got Jerome meter readings of .403 inside box and .247 around hole in protective cover (plastic was wrapped around box and taped).
- c. Advised Nicor to have clean-up contractors come by ASAP to check this out.
 - Update - Nicor had Heritage come to the site on Saturday afternoon. They recovered the box and will return week of September 5.

7. Joliet Service Center - Route 30 and Gauger, near Joliet.

- IEPA team.
- a. New open drum set up for mercury regulators.
- b. Jerome meter - Got trace reading of .004 in the mercury collection work area. All zeros around the roll-off box.

8. Paxton Service Center - 300 North Washington, in Paxton.

- IEPA team.
- a. Never had mercury regulators here, only the spring-loaded type.
- b. Jerome meter - Only trace reading at roll-off box outside (.001 - .005).

9. Crestwood Service Center

- IEPA team.
- a. Do mercury collection here and had open drum inside for regulators.
- b. Jerome meter - Got readings of .051 and .029 near floor and containment flasks. One box outside had readings of .004, .007, and .014.
- c. Advised Nicor to follow up on this site. Residential area.
- d. Update: Nicor advised us that the roll-off box would be covered.

10. Skokie Service Center - Nicor could not get arrangements made for access.

Tuesday, September 5

1. DeKalb Iron and Metal at 900 Oak, in DeKalb.

- IEPA team.
- a. One box of mercury regulators. May have others in another pile.
- b. Jerome meter - Got reading of 0.017 next to a cracked regulator and 0.005 off top of box. Rest were zero.

2. Simon and Wienman, 78 Monroe Avenue, in Dixon.

- a. No regulators here. Only taken pipe materials.

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- b. No meter readings taken.
3. Ace Iron and Metals, 11th and Third Avenue, in Joliet.
- IEPA team.
 - a. Don't know of any large number of regulators coming here. A few may have been received.
 - b. Jerome meter - Got some positive readings but meter was not operating per normal.
4. Behr Iron and Steel, 1100 Seminary, in Rockford.
- IEPA team.
 - a. No regulators were found here.
 - b. Meter readings all zero.

MERCURY (elemental) action criteria

9-1-00
J.B. [signature]

IDLH 28 mg/m^3
Immediately dangerous to life and health
health worker can escape within 30 min. without permanent health effects

OSHA/NIOSH 0.01 mg/m^3
8-hour average for 5 days/week - occupational standard
.05 / 1.0 mg/m^3 in air

IDPH (residential)
8 hr. clearance level 0.001 mg/m^3

Jerome relocation
decision level $> 0.010 \text{ mg/m}^3$

Contractor relocation
action level w/ Jerome any reading
on Jerome

TACC (soil) remediation objectives
commercial/industrial
site worker 610 mg/kg

construction worker 61 mg/kg

residential 10 mg/kg

OCS / SLAC (air at fence line) 0.0003 mg/m^3
Screening level air concentration (level where further investigation is warranted)

T-1
9/22/00

FXL Briefing: TV-2 interview on Mercury "Big Picture" (Jim Acosta), 2-3pm 9-22-00

- **NICOR [248,000 homes]:**
 - Visually inspected 0,000 homes, confirmed contam at 000 , relocated 00 families.
 - Will return with Lumex or Jerome meters later.
 - 255 industrial "manometer" sites, confirmed contam at 12.
 - Cleanup underway at Chicago Heights scrapyard (EPA oversight), to be followed by DeKalb, Ottawa, Joliet sites (4 total).
 - IEPA lead on Service Centers (7 of 43 were confirmed).
 - AG order to add QA/QC contractor A-OK w/EPA.
- **Peoples Energy [30,000 Chicago, 55,000 North Shore Gas homes]:**
 - Visually inspected 14,000 homes (27,000 doors), confirmed contam at 10.
 - Will return with Lumex or Jerome meters later.
 - 1,800 manometer sites; 440 "sensitive sites." 250 inspected, confirmed contam at 4
 - Info request due at EPA on Thursday, including scrap yards and service centers
 - Primarily CDOE lead, with active EPA guidance.
 - We anticipate AG will take similar steps and demand court oversight and deliverables.
- **Residential Q: "How do I know what's safe--and what isn't safe?"**
 - Like the Sun-Times said in an editorial last week, Don't Panic. Anything less than a dime-sized spill is probably not cause for alarm, especially if it's in a basement corner of where no one ever goes. Even larger spills do not usually lead to health damages, especially in well ventilated areas. But if you do spot something, please call the toll-free numbers Nicor and Peoples have set up. And don't try and clean it up yourself. EPA and the gas companies have special vacuums they use that won't scatter it further.
 - If you have an older regulator that you think has mercury, it's perfectly safe unless you start tampering with it.
- **How does exposure occur, and what are the health impacts?**
 - The primary concern with mercury spills indoors is exposure to the mercury vapor released by liquid mercury, which at high levels can cause a variety of health effects, including gingivitis, tremors, vision and hearing problems, and skin rashes.
 - Mercury spills and improper mercury disposal, together with emissions from coal combustion and other industrial sources, also increase the levels of mercury in the environment. Mercury deposits from the atmosphere into water bodies, where it can accumulate up the food chain in its organic form (methylmercury), which is even more toxic than the elemental mercury vapor created by mercury spills. People who consume large amounts of top predator fish can be at risk of excess-exposure. Exposure to a fetus through the mother's consumption of fish is the primary concern, and can cause developmental deficits. That's why the State health depts have been issuing fish consumption advisories since the 1970s.
- **"What if it takes a long time for the gas companies to get back to me and followup?"**

The gas companies are prioritizing their followup based on potential for health effects. If you suspect contamination and there is a pregnant woman or child under 5 in your home,

call your gas company to alert them. But if you can't see anything, there's really no reason to be worried. If you truly think you have a lot--more than a droplet or two--call the gas company again and give them more details. Otherwise, contain that area--put a cardboard box over it, ventilate the room to the outside--and hold tight. Leave it alone and wait for the authorities to come take a look.

- **"What can be done in the future, so that this doesn't happen again?"**

--Now that this is a national story, with major financial liability [Crain's figures Nicor is on the hook for \$20 million +], I'm quite confident that utility companies and other industries that use mercury all over the country are tuning the issue in. EPA and its partner agencies will also be taking a closer look at the national picture--the Chicago office has been in many of those conversations already.

--Talk to your kids about the dangers of mercury. There's lot of material online and in the papers every day right now. Mercury wiggles and bounces and is attractive to kids--so now is the perfect time to remind them that it's dangerous.

- **Elsewhere:**

--Information beginning to shake out; one home in Philadelphia (1995), another in Indiana (1998), this year there was a spill in Westchester County, NY involving a plumber, a few cases involving different equipment (thermostats) from the KC EPA office; We know the 3 gas companies in Michigan are also starting to take a closer look at their systems.

--A dozen SF ERB calls of various kinds each year in R5. Typically kids who get hold of some mercury and take it home or to school, or someone who finds a container full that was illegally dumped somewhere.

--National scope probably just coming to light now. We hope this is an isolated situation, but we have yet to hear from other R5 utilities or their trade associations with an indication they've asked the right questions to even have a good handle on their exposure risks. State Commerce Commission--which regulate gas companies--are sure to get involved soon.

--High-level discussions at EPA now in high-gear. Not clear what will develop on a policy level, but fair to say the next Administration will want to be proactive if it continues to be a big news story

- **EPA Role(s):**

--General: Evolving into "technical support" and spotchecking the various cleanups around the Chicago area. We have the most experience and staff for doing mercury cleanups, compared to the City, Illinois EPA, and other agencies. However, Superfund authority is out there too . . .

--Health agencies (IDPH, ATSDR): They're working to make sure people get appropriate urine testing and followup monitoring. EPA is coordinating with them, as we always do.

- **Industry use:**

--Common in electrical equipment and medical instruments. A few industries have been actively phasing it out in recent years--you may have seen non-mercury thermometers and cleaner, greener batteries at the drug store. But there's a lot of it out there, and hopefully

the current situation will encourage companies to look more closely at what they've got and what can be upgraded with newer, mercury-free technology.

- **Pro-active EPA efforts:**

- Ongoing regulatory and enforcement focus on incinerators that burn mercury-containing municipal and medical wastes, sending mercury into the atmosphere, where it settles over Lakes and streams and finds its way into the food chain.

- [possibly—a decision was expected to be announced on September 21, but this has not been confirmed] A decision to regulate mercury emissions from coal-fired electric utilities, thought to be the biggest source of mercury to the environment. A final regulation of this sector is scheduled for the end of 2004.

- Clean Sweeps: In Illinois, EPA, the City and many other agencies launched a program last year to help small businesses and local government offices take a look at the mercury/PCB equipment they have and help them arrange for disposal. Examples: fluorescent lamps, thermostats, gauges and other older equipment. Call 1-888-SWEEP22.

- School outreach efforts with ATSDR, our sister health agency, and State agencies, to teach kids about mercury and it's hazards, and to encourage schools to eliminate mercury from school laboratories.

- A variety of voluntary cooperative efforts with industry, including working with the chlorine production industry on a voluntary commitment to reduce mercury use 50 percent by 2005, a memorandum of understanding with the American Hospital Association to virtually eliminate mercury from medical waste, a voluntary agreement with three northwest Indiana steel mills to reduce the use of mercury-containing equipment, working with thermostat manufacturers on a take-back program for mercury-containing thermostats, and (with Michigan lead) working with the auto industry to eliminate mercury switches from autos.

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